

Wm Mathewson
A N
E P I S T L E
T O
F R I E N D S
CONCERNING THE

Present and Succeeding TIMES:

BEING

A Faithful Exhortation and Warning to all Friends, who profess the TRUTH, to beware of the manifold Wiles of the Enemy, and to stand armed in the Light of the LORD GOD of Heaven and Earth, against his Assaults, that so they may be ready to answer the Call and Requirings of the LORD.

ALSO,

Something signified of the Misery of the Succeeding Times, that all may be prepared, and that the evil Day may not overtake any unawares, but such as turn away their Ear from COUNSEL.

By one who is a Traveller in the Way of Peace, and hath Good-will towards all Men, and more especially to the Household of Faith; STEPHEN CRISP.

“ Let him that hath an Ear, hear what the Spirit saith to
“ the Churches.” REV. ii.

L O N D O N :

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T H E
P R E F A C E.

*T*HE ensuing Tract is re-published at the Request of several Friends, who thought it might be of Service to settle the the Minds of many in these unstable Times, and incline them to look Home to that Rock which has been, is, and will be, the only Safety for the Righteous, in all Storms and Trials of every Kind which may attend them in this Life; and it was thought necessary to reprint it for general Service at this Time, wherein there are such Commotions, Wars, and Rumours of Wars in the Earth.

P R E F A C E

The English Press is so prejudiced at the
 prospect of General Foy's, that thought is
 might be of Service to settle the minds of many
 in this unhappy Island, and induce them to look
 Home, that Book which has been, is, and will be,
 the only Safety for the Righteous, in all Storms and
 Trials of every Kind which may attend them in this
 Life, and it was thought necessary to reprint it
 for general Service at this Time, wherein there
 are such Convictions, Warnings, and Remonstrances of War,
 in the North.

(A N)

EPISTLE

TO

FRIENDS concerning the Present
and Succeeding TIMES.

DEAR FRIENDS,

YOU whom the Lord hath reached unto, in this the Day of his Love, and to whom he hath made known the Way of Truth and Righteousness, through the raising up of that holy living Witness of himself, that long lay hid and buried in you, and hath brought you to a secret feeling of something in yourselves, that is worth the minding and regarding; and the Lord causing this to appear in the Day of your seeking, as a *Light* discovering Darkneſs and its Power, by which ye were formerly held, and given you by his Spirit a Sense and secret Hope, that in this *Light* the Way of Deliverance was to be attained unto; this Hope made you not aſhamed of the *Light* which before you hated, but you came to know and embrace it, even while others ſtill hated it, and you for its ſake; yet your Hearts being affected with the Hope that did appear therein, could not but ſo far join unto it, as to make publick Profeſſion of it for its own ſake, and for no other Ends or Deſigns, or Intereſt at all, but with Reſolution in that *Light*, to wait for the Salvation of God. *Dear Friends*, it is for you aforementioned, that both
now,

now, and for some Days and Weeks, my Heart hath been deeply exercised, even Night and Day ; and the Aboundings of the Father's Love do often overcome me, and draw me forth now to say and write these Things unto you, for your Admonition and Establishment. And indeed it is you who did thus rightly own the Way of Truth, and knew your Believing to be the Gift and Mercy of God to your Souls, that I do aim at ; for those who have taken up the Profession of the precious Truth upon By-respects and sinister Ends, and but for Reasons propounded in their carnal Minds, though I do pity them, yet I have not much at this Time to say to them, but this, *The Day shall declare them, and their Garments shall not hide them.*

But you, Oh *my Friends!* who had Fellowship with us in the deep Travails of our Beginnings, and did come to Truth the same Way, and have known the Power and Virtue of it, many Times overcoming you in your inward Man, which hath made you cry out, *Lord, evermore give us of this Bread;* and hath made you as a watered Garden : Oh *Friends!* how shall I express or signify unto you those Longings, those ardent Desires, and earnest Breathings of my Soul, that you, even you, may abide to the End of all Trials, Tribulations, and Adversities, and may inherit that Crown of Immortality which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, may not by any means be bereft thereof. This is singly my Travail in Body and Spirit, that you may be kept and preserved out of all the subtil Snares of the wicked One, who hunts for the Souls, even of those who have believed ; and therefore in dear and tender Love I have a few Things,

Thing, to write unto you for the clearing of my Conscience, and discharging my Duty in the Sight of the Lord : and the Lord give you all a tender and an understanding Heart, that both you and I may yet have Cause daily to praise the Lord in the glorious Light of his Salvation, which he hath manifested among us by the revealing his Son Jesus Christ, to whom belongs Dominion, Honour and Glory, for ever. *Amen.*

And first, *dear Friends*, it is in my Heart to put you in Remembrance of that by which we were called and convinced, which, as a Foundation Principle, was laid in and among you, and it being unchangeable and unalterable in itself, doth therefore admit of no Alteration or Change in those who are rightly kept to it.

It was a *Light* which arose in our Hearts, and shined forth from God the Father of Lights, carrying in its Appearance the Nature and Property of God, both in its condemning Evil, which the Enemy had sown or planted in us, and owning, allowing, and justifying every Thing that was good and honest, just and equal ; even those Thoughts in our Hearts which were for turning towards the Lord, and seeking his Righteousness ; these Thoughts were justified and encouraged by the *Light*, and all the contrary discovered and judged, as they were brought to it to be tried. Now, this *Light* did our Souls rejoice in, as they had good Cause, though it took away our former Rejoicings ; our Pleasures in Vanities and Iniquity died, our Glory in this World withered, our Friendship with the Sons of Men decayed, and we stood in the *Light* and saw all these Things,
and

and were not sorry at it, but waited daily to see these Things more and more brought to pass; neither was there a permitting our Thoughts to go out, how we might prevent those Damages, or repair these Losses, but the Cross of Christ was indeed our glorying or rejoicing; and the Hope that was before us did make us despise the Pleasures, Treasures and Honours, Friendships and Delights of this World; and in those Days you grew into a Feeling of the heavenly Joy, where the Hundred-fold was witnessed in your Bosoms, and the Zeal of the Lord was kindled by his own Spirit in you, against whatsoever this *Light* of Jesus in the Conscience did witness against. And the Lord beheld your Integrity, and blessed you, and multiplied you, and added to your Strength and Stature; and then did the Fruits of this glorious Work abound among you, in three more general and special Effects; by which Effects, or by their Continuance among you, let all now come to search and try themselves, that so, *dear Friends*, those who have continued faithful in them all, may persevere in like manner to the End: And those, who upon true Search do find that they have failed, and fallen short in all or any of them, may make haste to repent, and to turn to that which was the Root of them all, that they may not be found as fruitless and withered Branches in the Day that cometh, lest they be cut off and utterly consumed from among the living Branches of the Vine; for a Day cometh that *Truth* will look into the Fig-tree for Fruit, and Leaves will not defend it from the Curse and Blasting.

The

The three especial Fruits that did spring forth from this blessed Root, and were and are to continue and increase in us, and among us to the End, are these, *viz.*

1. PURITY, manifested in a godly Conversation.
2. UNITY, manifested in dear and tender Love one towards another.
3. FAITHFULNESS, manifested in bearing a constant and faithful Testimony to the Things we had received and believed, though it were unto great Loss and Sufferings.

And against all these doth the wicked One appear, to see if he can make you barren concerning them, and that with divers Wiles and Subtilties, that he may prevail on you, and not be known to be the Enemy, but might so overcome you, as that you might both submit to him, and then plead for him and his Snares and Wiles, as being just, right, lawful, prudent, convenient, &c. But, oh *dear Friends!* let all be watchful and diligent to wait in the Sense and true Feeling of that Seed which never fell nor was beguiled, and you will (even the least of you) see and comprehend his Workings and Transformings, and be delivered from them.

1. PURITY and HOLINESS was a Fruit in you, which doth yet flourish in many (blessed be the Lord) who are as watchful and careful to approve themselves in Obedience to the Light of Truth in their inward Parts as ever, and find as great a Necessity both of trying and judging with its Judgment, as ever; these having thus waited, have renewed their Strength unto this very Day, and do mount up as upon the Wings of an Eagle; these

are neither weary in running, nor faint they in their walking: But alas, *Friends!* even these do know with how great and manifold Assaults they have been assaulted, and know and see with Sorrow of Heart, how the Assault hath prevailed upon some, by working into the Mind a secret Liberty, and supposed Enlargedness, whereby a *Carelesness* hath entered some, and they having no Keeper but the Measure of *Light* revealed in their Hearts and Consciences, so soon as they came to be persuaded to slight the Reproofs of that, they soon erred; and this supposed Liberty entered, *That now, after so many Years Strictness and Circumspection, they should not need to stand so straitly to try Things and Words as at first, because now a Day of more Liberty was come;* and this Liberty secretly prevailed against that pure Fear that once was placed in their Hearts, and against the very Obedience of Truth, inwardly in the Subjection of the Mind, and then it became manifest outwardly; the Actions sometimes blame-worthy, the Words and Speech again corrupted, and run into the old Channel of the World, like them again, and the single pure Language, learned in the *Light*, in the Time of their Poverty and Simplicity, almost lost and forgotten, and so the Work of God which he wrought, in a manner laid waste: And then, when this Liberty is entered, and made use of as aforesaid, oftentimes a secret Subtilty ariseth against the Judgment of Truth, either from within, or from some outwardly, who are grieved with this loose and careless Kind of speaking or acting, which Subtilty leads to contend for it against the Judgment, telling the Creature,

ture, *Why, these Things are but small Things, and little Things, and what, we must not strain at a Gnat, and such like.* Oh, my Friends! beware of these evil Suggestions of the wicked One: How came they to be small and little Things, seeing they were great Things with us in the Beginning? And how comes an Offence of this Nature to be light now, seeing it was heavy in the Beginning? Oh let not the greatest Mercies of our God so fill us, as to make us slight or forget the least Obedience, but rather let the Continuance of his Mercy the more quicken you up unto a Zeal for his Name and Truth in all Things, to be found doing and speaking according to the Rule of Righteousness, which ye learned in the *Light*, in the Day of your being low and little, and then nothing will rise up and be exalted in the Multitude of God's Mercies, but that holy Birth which lives in Purity when it is at highest; and so that Life of Righteousness will shine forth more and more, which glorifies God, and seeks his Honour. *Dear Friends,* that ye may be kept so unto the End, is the Breathing and Travail of my Soul: And that where this Neglect hath entered, and this aforesaid Corruption, either in Speech or Action, is to be found, that ye would receive the Word of Exhortation in Meekness and Fear, in which it is written unto you, and may redeem the Time, for the Days are and shall be evil, and none will hold the Mystery of the Faith (which saves from falling in the evil Day) but such as do keep the pure and undefiled Conscience, which none can do, but by persisting and continuing in

the daily Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief and Obedience of the Truth.

2. A second Fruit that was brought forth from this good Root, was UNITY and LOVE *one towards another*; which, blessed be the Lord, is preciously preserved in and among many to this very Day, who are so sensible of the divers Operations of Truth in them to be all by one Spirit, that they are still kept of one Heart and Mind, given up freely to serve the Lord in Singleness of Heart in their Generation; and are in this good Work as Strengtheners and Encouragers of one another; but, notwithstanding, the Enemy hath been exceeding busy to lay waste and destroy this blessed Effect also, and that under divers Pretences, which the Lord still discovered by his own Light and Spirit in his People, who have singly waited upon him; for many have been his Wiles, sometimes fitting and preparing Vessels to rise up in the fleshly and sensual Wisdom, to traduce Friends, and bring in corrupt and evil Doctrines, to try who were not sound in the Faith, that they might draw them aside into an Heat and Zeal for something which had not its Root in the Truth, and which they who abode in the Truth could not own, but judge and condemn in the Name of the Lord. Which, when such saw, they took thereat Occasion of striving to propagate and promote that which they saw withstood; so having lost Subjection to the Spirit of Truth in themselves, which would have kept them in Unity in the Body; and having also lost and laid by their Subjection to those who were over them in the Lord, they then grew stubborn and wilful, and proceed-
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ed in more Zeal for that which stood in Opposition to the Truth, than ever they did for the Truth itself; and these sometimes have prevailed to the subverting whole Households, and have turned several from the Faith and Simplicity which is in the Gospel, who, as well as those that subverted them, have lost the Fellowship of the Saints, and the Savour of Life, both in themselves and others, and then the Enemy persuaded them, *all were dead to the Life but themselves*; and so they grow to have a tickling Joy in what they do and say, in Obedience to that perverse and singular private Spirit, and so grow up to speak Evil of Dignities, and are unruly, and dare to speak against Heaven, and them that dwell and inhabit in it, whom God makes to shine as Stars in the Firmament of his Power: But alas for them! my Soul pities them, when I see how they sport themselves with their own Deceivings; but the Day of the Lord is among his People, which hath and doth make them and their Spirits manifest, and their Fruits also have made them manifest.

Another Way that the Enemy seeks to break the *Unity*, and dissolve the Bond of *Amity*, is, by sowing a Seed of *Jealousy* and *Prejudice* in the Hearts of such in whom he can get an Entrance, that so they may cease from the true and unfeigned Love, and that upon a pretended Reason, because of this or that, which is supposed or imagined, in the evil Parts in themselves, against others, giving heed to evil Thoughts or Surmises, which break forth many Times in Whisperings and Tale-bearing; which, though the Thing
supposed

supposed to be evil, was really so, yet this is not to be allowed or given way to among you, but to use Plainness one towards another, and Single-heartedness, and to shut out the evil one in this his subtil Appearance also. Oh, *dear Friends!* remember how the Lord hath dealt with you, and deal you so one by another; he hath not sought Occasions against you, but hath long born and suffered, and exercised much Patience and Tenderneſs towards you, yet plainly reproving the Evil in you, and not treasuring it up against you. Oh, *Friends!* be like-minded one towards another, that the Enemy of your Peace and Concord may be defeated, and you preserved entire to one Head, even to Christ Jesus, and ye may be one, and the Name of the Lord may be one among you; and that which tends to the making cold your Love, may be judged in all; and so Brotherly-Love will continue with you to the End.

Another Way which the Enemy works to scatter, and to bring from this *Unity*, is, by leading some, who have believed, into some Sin and Iniquity which the Body (who are in the Truth) are constrained to appear in Judgment against for the Truth's Sake; and yet notwithstanding the Parties so sinning being above the Witnesses in themselves, which would bring them to own the Judgment of the Spirit of Christ in his Church, they exalt themselves above the Judgment, and seek to gain to them such whom they can enter, by their Words and Complaints, to take Part with them against the Judgment, and those who passed it. Such were those whose Words *did eat* (the Apostle

Apostle said) *as a Canker*, of whom the Believers in those Days were to be aware ; for commonly such as have gone from the Power that should have kept them clear and upright, will also turn against the Power in those who abide in it, especially if they be drawn forth to reprove and rebuke them : But let all such know, that is not the Way to be renewed ; and let all that take Part with any who work Iniquity, know, that they do but defile their own Souls thereby, and rend themselves from that Body which they cannot prosper out of. And therefore, *dear Friends*, beware of joining with that, in yourselves or in others, which the Power goeth against, let the Pretences be what they will ; for that which doth Evil, will always be apt to sow evil Complaining of others ; and such as are in the unsatisfied Murmuring against Judgment passed upon them, are much to be feared ; for they thereby render themselves the more guilty, and yet the further from Repentance. But, *dear Friends*, watch unto that which gives you a living Feeling of the living Body, which is the Church, that in all Things you may demean yourselves as true Members of it, serving one another in Love, and submitting yourselves one unto another for the Lord's Sake, that in all Plainness and Singleness, as becometh the Truth, you may seek to preserve the Unity which the Enemy of Truth and Peace doth envy ; so shall ye continue to strengthen one another's Hand in every good Work, and this shall tend to the weakening of the Hands of your Enemies, who seek to divide you, that they may rule over you. Many other Designs doth the wicked One
try,

try, daily to break and divide, more than can now be named, or here inserted ; but they are all out of the *Light*, and if you be in it, you will see them, and that will preserve you ; for it is one, and did make us one, and will keep us to be of one Heart and Mind to the End, if we abide in it.

3. The third good Effect which Truth did work in the Beginning, in those who did truly receive it, was ZEAL and FAITHFULNESS to God, in the bearing Testimony to what was manifest, though through great Sufferings ; in which, as Friends abide in the Root, they do daily increase in Power, to fulfil the same Testimony ; for the Mercy of the Lord doth engage them, and his Answer of Peace in the Midst of their Trials doth arm and encourage them, and they hold out to the End ; and for such the Lord hath always made a Way, better than they could have made for themselves : Yet the Enemy hath in this Matter also been very busy, and hath prevailed with some under divers Considerations, or rather Consultations, which he hath propounded unto them. But, Oh *Friends*, be ye all watchful, and take heed lest any of the Testimonies of Truth be laid waste ; for that which leads to be weary of bearing Witness to the Truth, and to lay it waste, the same will lay thee waste, and bring thee into such a State, as thou wilt want the Truth to bear Witness for thee ; and though it be hard for Flesh and Blood (which hath no Kingdom but here) to fall into the Hands of unreasonable Men, yet it is a more fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the living God ; and therefore, let all lukewarm
Ones,

Ones, who are neither hot, nor cold, be awakened, and all, who have gone backwards, be warned to *return to their first Love, else the Lord will come against them, and the Day hastens that will divide such their Portion among Hypocrites, except they repent.*

But to touch at some of the Reasons or Arguments which he, that abode not in the Truth himself, used to draw others into this Kind of treacherous Backsliding, observe as follows,

First, He appears to some to persuade them, that their *former Testimony* was borne more from an Imitation of others, than from a Work of the Power of God in themselves; and that now, they not finding the Thing required of them, they may leave off their Testimonies, or may do such Things as they have denied formerly: This Snare doth the Enemy make use of in these Days. But mark who it is that he hath caught with it; none but such who sometimes were low in their Minds, and dared not to grieve the Spirit of God in themselves or others, but for the Truth's Sake could give up all Things, rather than their Testimony; but in Time growing careless and loose in waiting, lost that subject State, and grew high and exalted in their Minds above the Cross that should have crucified the betraying Wisdom; and so having lost the true Exercise of the Power, and the Feeling of the Excellency and Worth of the Truth, they knew not the Requirings of the Lord; and the earthly Mind got up, which placed a greater Esteem upon earthly Things, than upon Things that are eternal; and so Things that once thou offeredst up to God, thou takest again into

thine own Hand, and so robbest the Lord, and growest careful about outward Things, as other *Gentiles* do; and to cover thy Shame therein, the Enemy then tempts thee to belye the Power which once wrought in thy Heart, and made thee afraid to act against the *Light*, or to deny the Testimony for God in such Things as were manifest, and then thou sayest, *thou didst it by Imitation*; but thou shalt know thy Covering is too narrow in the Day that hasteth upon thee.

Another Temptation which the Enemy presenteth, is, that though thou art convinced *what to do*, or *what thou shouldst deny*, yet the Trials are so hard and so many, and Persecutors wax worse and worse, so that thou shalt not be able to hold out to the End; and where he can get Entrance with this Bait, he presently causeth an evil Heart of Unbelief and Doubting to arise, which takes away even the Strength that the Lord did give, and so Feebleness doth enter the Mind, and a Spirit of Bondage leads thee to fear again; and then comes the Dispute in thy Heart, whether thou *shalt stand* with the Power of God, in the Obedience, or whether thou *shalt fall* under that Power that ariseth against God, and his Truth and People? And in this Combat thou hast a subtil Enemy, using many Devices to betray thee; and a Part in thyself, not yet mortified, that is ready to say, *Pity thyself, pity thy Wife, pity thy Children, and pity thy Relations*; which it may be sometimes, are all as so many Instruments of Satan to seduce thee, and lead thee into Darkness, that thou mayst not see so great Necessity in thy bearing up thy Testimony, as indeed there is,

nor

nor so great a Danger in the contrary, as indeed there is.

Oh *Friends!* at such a Time as this, where is there any Help but in the *Lord*? Where canst thou find a Saviour, but in that *Light* which gives to distinguish the several Voices? Now it is good for thee to remember, that *if thou walkest after the Flesh, thou must and shalt surely die and wither.* In such a Time flee, flee to the Lord, wait in his Dread to feel thy Strength but renewed at the present, and take no Care for Strength next Month, next Year, or next Trial, for *God is God, and changeth not, and will be the same to thee in seven Trials as in six, if thou believest and waitest on him in Uprightness.* And therefore fear not Man, but trust in the Lord, all ye who have known and felt his Power, and let not in the Enemy of your Souls by the Door of *carnal Reasoning*, but keep that shut; and rather consider, how the Enemy makes thee as a Rejoicing among his own Children, and strengthens that Hope in them, of their overcoming all others, as well as thee; which Hope is cursed, and shall be confounded. And consider, that if thou lettest fall thy Testimony, which thou hast once borne for the Lord, thou makest the Heart of the Righteous sad, and makest their Travail through that Testimony the harder for them, by reason of thy encouraging their Adversaries by the Hope aforesaid. And whatever thou dost, *they must go thorough to the End, who will inherit the Crown of Immortality.*

And again consider, it may be, that thy Backsliding, or cowardly drawing away the Shoulder,

may prove a Discouragement to others, and they may stumble in thy Stumbling, and fall with thee, and never be able to rise, and so thou bringest their Blood also upon thee. Oh! remember also that the Servant of the Lord, who could say, *Psalms cxix. 157. Many are my Persecutors, and mine Enemies: yet do I not decline from thy Testimonies.* That was a noble Spirit becoming the Soldiers of Christ; yea, *though persecuted by Princes,* as he saith, *Vers. 161.*

Dear Friends, let your Minds be stirred up to be zealous for the Lord, in this the great Day of Controversy with Darkness and its Power. Who hath God to bear Witness to his Name, but you? Among whom hath he made it known, as among you? Who have given up themselves to the Lord, as you have done? Well, *Blessed are they that keep Covenant with the Lord, for they shall see his Glory.*

One more subtil Snare of the Enemy in this Matter is in my Heart to mention, which is this, *viz.* To persuade thee for once to do that which the *Light* hath made manifest thou shouldst not, with a Purpose afterwards to be more faithful. Oh *Friends!* In the Name and Fear of the Lord I exhort and warn you all to take heed of this, for it will prove but a false Confidence; thou wilt find this Kind of going out of the Guidance of Truth, to be a dear Out-going to thee, for if ever thou dost return, it will be very hardly, and with bitter Anguish of Soul. Oh! do not tempt the Lord on this wise, *lest it do prove impossible, upon thy sinning willingly, to renew or restore thee again by Repentance;* thou wilt have thy *Pottage,* but wilt lose the *Blessing,* though
thou

thou may seek it with thy Tears; for while thou wentest out, behold, thy Way became hedged up, and the thorny Nature got up in thee, and so thou art debarred and fenced out from enjoying thy former State; Sin being entered, Death soon follows. Oh! Remember Sampson, who when he had disclosed the Token of a Nazarite, in which State he stood in Covenant with God, yet thought to have shaken himself, and to have gone forth in his Strength, as at other Times, but was mistaken, Judges xvi. 20. for the Lord was departed from him, though he knew it not. And so, though thou hast known the Lord's Presence and Power in thy Vessel, yet take heed of letting in that treacherous Spirit, to lead thee to Unfaithfulness, and to betray the least of his Trusts and Testimonies committed to thee, though it be but for once; for thereby thou wilt render thyself unworthy to be found a Witness of his Power another Time; for the Lord will leave that Vessel, and often doth, and chuseth other Vessels to manifest himself in, who will be more true and faithful.

So, dear Friends, in true and tender Love I have laid these Things before you, that ye may all be stirred up and provoked to Love, and to good Works; that ye may abound in the Grace committed to you, and none of you who have known the Truth, may be entangled with the Wiles of your subtil Enemy; and that you who have begun well, may not lose the Things that ye have wrought, but may persevere in Well-doing till ye have finished your Course in Peace. And, Friends, this is the Joy and Delight of those who labour among you in the Lord, and hereby are
adgileb our

our Hands strengthened, and our Hearts refreshed, when we do find you such as we desire ye should be, even stedfast in the Truth; and then also do you find us to you-ward, such as ye desire we should be, even a Refreshing in the Fellowship of Life unto you; and our God comforts us together in the mutual Joy and Comfort of his Holy Spirit, working in us and in you.

And, *Friends*, I am the more drawn forth at this Time to visit you with an Epistle, because the Lord hath given me some Sight of his great and dreadful Day, and Workings in it, which is at hand, and greatly hastens, of which I have something to say unto you, that ye may be prepared to stand in his Day, and may behold his wondrous Working among his Enemies, and have Fellowship with his Power therein, and may not be dismayed nor driven away in the Tempest, which will be great.

And as concerning those *Succeeding Times*, the Spirit of the Lord hath signified, that they will be Times of Horror and Amazement to all those who have, and yet do reject his Counsel: For as the Days of his Forbearance, Warning and Inviting, have been long, so shall his Appearance amongst those who have withstood him, be fierce and terrible; even so terrible, as *who shall abide his Coming?* For the Lord will work both secretly and openly, and his Arm shall be manifest to his Children in both.

Secretly, he shall raise up a continual fretting Anguish amongst his Enemies, one against another, so that being vexed and tormented inwardly, they shall seek to make each other miserable, and
delight

delight therein for a little Season : And then the Prevailer must be prevailed over, and the Digger of the Pit must fall therein ; and the Confidence which Men have had in one another shall fail, and they will beguile and betray one another, both by Counsel and Strength ; and as they have banded themselves to break you whom God had gathered, so shall they band themselves one against another, to break, to spoil and destroy one another ; and through the Multitude of their Treacheries, all Credit or Belief, upon the Account of their solemn Engagement, shall fail ; so that few Men shall count themselves, or what is theirs, safe in the Hand of his Friend, who hath not chosen his Safety and Friendship in the pure Light of the unchangeable Truth of God : And all the secret Counsels of the Ungodly shall be brought to nought, sometimes by the Means of some of themselves, and sometimes by Impossibilities lying in their Way, which shall make their Hearts fail of ever accomplishing what they have determined ; and in this State shall Men fret themselves for a Season, and shall not be able to see the Hand that turns against them, but shall turn to fight against one Thing, and another, and a third Thing, and shall stagger and reel in Counsel and in Judgment, as drunken Men who know not where to find the Way to Rest ; and when they do yet stir themselves up against the holy People, and against the holy Covenant of Light, and them who walk in it, they shall but the more be confounded ; for these shall be helped with a little Help, which all the Ungodly shall not hinder them of, *to wit*, the secret Arm of the Lord maintaining

maintaining their Cause, and raising up a Witness in the very Hearts of their Adversaries to plead their Innocency; and this shall make them yet the more to vex themselves, and to go thorough hard-bestead; for when they shall look upward to their Religion, to their Power, Policy, or Preferments, or Friendships, or whatsoever else they had trusted in, and relied upon, they shall have Cause to curse them; and when they look downwards to the Effects produced by all those Things, behold, then Trouble, and Horror, and Vexation takes hold on them, and drives them to Darkness; and having no Help but what is earthly, and being out of the Knowledge of the mighty overturning Power of the Lord God Almighty, they shall despair and wear out their Days with Anguish. And besides all this, the terrible Hand of the Lord is, and shall be openly manifested against this ungodly Generation, by bringing grievous and terrible Judgments and Plagues upon them, tumbling down all Things in which their Pride and Glory stood, and overturning even the Foundations of their Strength; yea, the Lord will lay waste the Mountain of the Ungodly, and the Strength of the fenced City shall fail; and when Men shall say, *We will take Refuge in them*, Nahum iii. 12, 13. they shall become but a Snare, and there shall the Sword devour: And when they shall say, *We will go into the Field, and put Trust in the Number and Courage of our Soldiers*, they shall both be taken away; And this Evil also will come of the Lord, and his Hand will be stretched out still, and shall bring Confusion, Ruin upon Ruin, and War upon War; and the Hearts of

Men

Men shall be stirred in them, and the Nations shall be as Waters, into which a Tempest, a swift Whirlwind is entered; and even as Waves swell up to the Dissolution one of another, and breaking one of another, so shall the Swellings of People be: And because of the Hardship and Sorrow of those Days, many shall seek and desire Death rather than Life.

Ah! my Heart relents, and is moved within me, in the Sense of these Things, and much more than I can write or declare, which the Lord will do in the Earth, and will also make haste to accomplish among the Sons of Men, that they may know and confess, *That the MOST HIGH doth rule in the Kingdoms of Men, and pulleth down and setteth up according to his own Will: And this shall Men do before seven Times pass over them, and shall be content to give their Glory unto him that sits in Heaven.*

But, Oh Friends! while all these Things are working, and bringing to pass, repose ye yourselves in the Munition of that Rock, which all these Shakings shall not move, even in the Knowledge and Feeling of the eternal Power of God, keeping you subjectly given up to his heavenly Will, and feel it daily to kill and mortify that which remains in any of you, which is of this World; for the worldly Part in any, is the changeable Part, and that is up and down, full and empty, joyful and sorrowful, as Things go well or ill in the World: For as the Truth is but one, and many are made Partakers of its Spirit, so the World is but one, and many are Partakers of the Spirit of it; and so many as do partake of it, so

many will be straitened and perplexed with it; but they who are single to the Truth, waiting daily to feel the Life and Virtue of it in their Hearts, these shall rejoice in the midst of Adversity, these shall not have their Hearts moved with Fear, nor tossed with Anguish because of evil Tidings, *Psal.* cxii. 7, 8. because that which fixeth them remains with them: These shall know their Entrance with the Bridegroom, and so be kept from Sorrow, though his Coming be with a Noise; and when a Midnight is come upon Man's Glory, yet, they being ready and prepared, it will be well with them, and having a true Sense of the Power working in themselves, they cannot but have Unity and Fellowship with the Works of it in the Earth, and will not at all murmur against what is, nor wish nor will what is not to be; these will be at rest till the Indignation passeth over, and these having no Design to carry on, nor any Party to promote in the Earth, cannot possibly be defeated nor disappointed in their Undertakings.

And when you see Divisions, and Parties, and Rendings in the Bowels of Nations, and Rumours and Tempests in the Minds of People, then take heed of being moved to this Party or to that Party, or giving your Strength to this or that, or counselling this Way or that Way; but stand single to the Truth of God, in which neither War, Rent, nor Division is; and take heed of that Part in any of you, which trusts and relies upon any Sort of the Men of this World, in the Day of their Prosperity, for the same Party will bring you to suffer with them in the Time of
their

their Adversity, which will not be long after ; for Stability in that Ground there will be none ; but when they shall say, *Come join with us in this or that*, remember you are joined to the Lord by his pure Spirit, to walk with him in Peace and in Righteousness, and you feeling this, it will gather out of all Bustlings, and Noises, and Parties, and Tumults, and lead you to exalt the Standard of Truth and Righteousness, in an innocent Conversation, to see who will flow unto that ; and this shall be a Refuge for many of the weary, tossed and afflicted Ones in those Days, and a Shelter for many, whose Day is not yet over.

So, *dearly beloved Friends and Brethren*, who have believed and known the blessed Appearance of the Truth, let not your Hearts be troubled at any of these Things : Oh ! let not the Things that are at present, nor Things that are yet to come, move you from your Stedfastness, but rather double your Diligence, Zeal, and Faithfulness to the Cause of God : For they who know the Work wrought in themselves, shall *rest in the Day of Trouble ; although the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall the Fruit be in the Vines, the Labour of the Olive shall fail, and the Fields shall yield no Meat, the Flocks shall be cut off from the Fold, and there shall be no Herd in the Stalls ; yet these shall rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their Salvation*, Hab. iii. 16, 17, 18.

And how near these Days are to this poor Nation, few know, and therefore the Cry of the Lord is very loud unto its Inhabitants, through his Servants and Messengers, that they would prize their Time while they have it, lest they be

overturned, wasted, and laid desolate before they are aware, and before Destruction come upon them, and there be no Remedy, as it hath already done upon many.

Oh LONDON ! LONDON ! That thou and thy Rulers would have considered, and hearkened and heard, in the Day of thy Warnings and Invitations, and not have persisted in thy Rebellion, till the Lord was moved against thee, to cut off the Thousands and Multitudes from thy Streets, and the pressing and thronging of People from thy Gates, and then to destroy and ruin thy Streets also, and lay desolate thy Gates, when thou thoughtest to have replenished them again.

And, Oh ! saith my Soul, that thy Inhabitants would yet be warned, and persuaded to repent and turn to the Lord, by putting away every one the Evil that is in their Hearts, against the Truth in themselves, and against those who walk in it, before a greater Desolation and Destruction overtake them.

Oh ! What shall I say to prevail with LONDON, and with its Inhabitants ! The Lord hath called aloud, he hath roared out of *Sion* unto them, but many of them have not hearkened at all, nor considered at all.

Well, Oh *my Friends* ! (and thou, oh my Soul !) return to your Rest, dwell in the Pavilion of the House of your God, and my God, and shelter yourselves under the Shadow of his Wings, where ye shall be Witnesses of his Doings, and see his strange Act brought to pass, and shall not be hurt therewith, nor dismayed.

Oh,

Oh, *my Friends!* in the Bowels of dear and tender Love have I signified these Things unto you, that ye may stand armed with the whole Armour of God, cloathed in Righteousness, and your Feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace, and freely given up in all Things to the Disposing of the Lord, who will deliver us, not by Might, nor by Sword, nor by Spear, but by his own eternal invifible Arm will he yet save us and deliver us, and get himself a Name by preserving of us; and we shall yet live to praise him who is worthy of Glory, of Honour and Renown, from the Rifing of the Sun to the Setting of the fame, now and for ever, *Amen, Amen*, faith my Soul.

P O S T S C R I P T.

DEAR FRIENDS AND BRETHREN,

I HAVE something further in my Heart to communicate unto you, in dear and tender Love, and in Desire of your Preservation out of the Snare of your Adversary; and that is, to exhort you all to dwell in the pure Judgment of the Truth, which is a Defence upon your Glory; and let none bereave you of this, under any Pretence whatsoever; but as you come to a true Feeling of the Life in yourselves, to which alone the certain Judgment appertaineth, so let this Life have Freedom, and stop it not from judging all that which is at Enmity with the Life, and tends to the hurting of the true Plant of God; for I have seen a Harm hath come to many who
have

have parted with their Judgment, and so have become unarmed, and the Enemy hath prevailed upon them (under a pretended Tenderneſs) to permit or ſuffer ſuch Things as were hurtful to themſelves and others; and though the Lord hath given them Judgment and Diſcerning in the Matter, yet were bereaved of that Gift, and ſo by little and little became beguiled.

Oh dear Friends! Conſider theſe Days are perilous Times, and it is needful for every one to watch in that ſame eternal Light to which you were firſt turned, that by its righteous Judgment ye may be preſerved from every Thing in yourſelves, that appears contrary to that precious Life of which you have taſted: And when you have ſo done, then take heed, that the Enemy doth not do that by an Inſtrument, which (through your Watchfulneſs in the Light) he could not do without; and all beware of that affected Tenderneſs, that cries out, *Be tender to all, and pray for all, and mind the Good in all, and love all, and judge none, but leave Judgment to God, &c.* I ſay, heed not the plauſible Words of that Spirit, which being guilty, to ſave its own Head from a Stroke, would bereave you of your Judgment, which God hath given you, and is indeed truly his Judgment, and is to be adminiſtered in his Wiſdom and Power, for the cleaning and keeping clean his Sanctuary; for ſuch as have no Judgment in their Goings, are they who know not the true Way of Peace, but make them crooked Paths, *He that goeth in them ſhall not know Peace*, Iſa. lix. 8.

But ſome may ſay, *Was not Chriſt meek and lowly? and ought not all to be like unto him?*

'Tis

'Tis true, *my Friends* ; but there is a Difference between the Seed's Suffering and its Reigning, and there are Times for them both : And when it doth please God to permit the Hour and Power of Darkness, in the open Persecutors, to exalt itself against his Seed and People, by Persecution or such like, they are led by his Spirit to appear in Meekness and Quietness, as a Sheep before the Shearer. But what is this to suffering bad and perverse Spirits, that appear under Pretence of the Truth, and yet are out of the Truth, and Enemies to its Prosperity, striving to exalt and set up another Thing instead of the Truth ? Such as these the Lord doth not require you to use only Patience and Meekness towards, but if that will not reclaim them, they must know the Judgment of the Truth, and you in it must stand over them ; for in this case the Day of the Exaltation of Christ is come, and God is crowning Truth with Dominion over every false Spirit, and corrupt Practice thereof.

And therefore, *dear Friends*, eye the Lord in his Goings forth, and as you feel his Life in you to witness against any evil or corrupt Thing or Practice, use Plainness, and keep Sincerity, and turn not Judgment backwards ; for that which is unwilling to be judged, and cries out, *Judge none, leave all to God, &c.* the same will take upon it both to judge and rule, but not in the Wisdom of God ; and those who cry out so much for Tenderness, and against Truth's Judgment, the same are most dangerous to be drawn out from the patient Suffering in the Spirit of Christ Jesus, when they ought to appear in the most Meekness,
and

and to appear rough and wrathful in the striving and fighting Nature, and are most apt to be tempted into a Spirit of Revenge, as hath been seen by sad Experience; for they who lose the Exercise of that by which all should keep Dominion over Deceit, they lose that Strength by which they should be enabled to suffer all Things for the Sake of Christ Jesus.

So, *dear Friends*, in that which keeps out the Defiler and the Betrayer, all wait upon the Lord, that you may have your Armour on, and be fortified with the Strength, with the Might, and with the Judgments of God, and keep that under in every Place, which under Pretence of Tenderness and Forbearance would make void the Testimony of Truth, or make the Offence of the Cross to cease in any thing wherein you have been instructed from the Beginning, that the Lord may behold and see Judgment established, and be pleased, *Isaiah lix. The Lord looked, and there was no Judgment, and it displeased him; for thereby Deceit got up, which with it is to be kept down.*

So the Lord God of Power and Wisdom preserve you faithful, and fitted for every good Word and Work; the Strong to watch over the Weak in Singleness, and the Weak to be subject to the Strong in the Lord, that so the pure Plant of Righteousness and Truth may grow in and among you all, to his Praise that hath called you: To whom be Glory and Honour for ever. Amen.

S. C R I S P.